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BY HILL AND WOODLAND.

My country-house stands on the verge of wide uplands, where I have before me a vast panorama of woods and hills, a green pastoral solitary world, where few sounds are heard except the bleating of flocks from the grassy straths, or the shrill whistle of the curlew, or the shepherd's hoarse call to his dogs. Jaded with the jostling, struggling life of a great city, the solitude charms me, especially when it is new. There is no other house within sight. I feel a personal peculiar interest in the wide landscape. No one looks at it exactly from the same point of view; it is peculiarly my own, as much my own as the wide, rambling, old-fashioned garden which lies between my dining-room window and the green, pastoral, restful world without.

I know every nook and cranny of this garden. I planted most of the flowers and shrubs, and some of the trees. I struck as a slip that glorious Gloire de Dijon rose which now covers nearly half the house, and which my rustic gardener persists in calling 'The glory of Dudgeon.' I reared with more than paternal solicitude that fine Victoria plum, at present displaying its treasures so temptingly on the south wall. The wind rustling in the drooping boughs of these weeping-willows is to me as the voice of the friend of my youth; for I was little more than a boy when I stuck the slender twigs from which they sprang into the soft turf. In the same intimate, kindly, personal manner I know every nook of these sunny hills, at present smiling to us in the mellow gleam of the October sunshine. I have seen them black with storm, dark with driving mists, shrouded in winding-sheets of snow. And with the same personal interest which I take in my flowers, I explore these wide-spreading woods. I know the ferny coverts which the rabbits love; the thickets of privet, where the young pheasants disport themselves; the glades where the great beeches spread their massy arms and drop their nuts by thousands. I have watched the nimble squirrels spring from

bough to bough, and the tiny dormice gathering their winter hoards from the Goshens of nuts below. I know the mossy paths which lead to fairy dells and hidden springs. I know the solemn far-reaching aisles of woodland shade, where the slant sunshine quivers down in bars of gold, and the great red boles of the pines gleam like pillars of porphyry.

How sweet the wood smells. How tender is the dim green light. What a charming surprise when the straggling sunshine bursts through the dense foliage overhead, and sends a shaft of gold twinkling through the innumerable leaves and branches. Gilding as it falls, it heightens into warm bronze the fading hues of the bracken, and lightens up the underwood of sloe and alder. How fresh the morning air is; the breeze that comes blowing across the hill-side is fragrant with the scent of the bog myrtle.

Far down below us a stream is winding; you can hear the musical plash of its waters as they gurgle down the stony bottom of the gorge. If you are a disciple of quaint old Izaak Walton, you may find rare sport in shine or shower in these silvan solitudes. For my own part, I never take rod in hand; I am at once too indolent and too restless for the gentle art; so, while you fill your basket, I will stretch myself here in the woodland shadows and dream of the past, and listen to the birds twittering in the boughs overhead, and watch the sheep feeding on those soft green hills, whose gently rounded swell makes such a charming foreground for the Titans behind, who cleave with sharp and frowning peak the smiling heavens.

The wind blows the clouds in fleecy masses across the sky, and there is a sudden change in the glowing picture; the great mountains beyond come into the foreground, as it were, with the change of light, and show themselves in a thousand changeful hues and gradations of colour. You see for a moment, distinctly, slopes and gullies of which you have ordinarily no conception. You begin to be aware of how subtle and infinite are the gradations of grays and blues

and purples in these far peaks and mountain masses. No mortal painter has ever mixed on earthly pallet the tender glow of these ethereal tints. No Claude Lorraine has caught, or ever will catch, the changeful brilliancy, the magical blending of faint and ever fainter hues in that picture of mountain beauty, as evanescent as it is lovely; for even as we gaze the clouds roll up and it is gone; and the light is shimmering with a faint golden sheen on the alders below, and the dark deep green of the grass which clothes the mounds and fills the trenches of that ancient Roman camp.

Far down among the scattered birches may be seen the figure of the patient angler; and around us on the hill-side, imagination, heaven's blest boon to man, re-creates the past. Against that hoary oak leans a sheaf of Roman spears. The soft turf quivers beneath the stately centurion's tread; the legionary's loud laugh startles once more the sleeping echoes. No rude hand of Goth or Hun has crippled as yet the flight of the Imperial eagles; but ruthless and fierce, they cleave these cold northern heavens with as fell a swoop, as strong a wing, as ever carried them under the sunny skies of the flower-spangled Campagna. Away over the green undulating upland you may trace the remains of one of their roads—solid masonry, enduring and strong, the footprints of the moral heroes of a vanished age; and on the bank beyond, a relic of the conquered, a Druid's stone—a huge boulder, so nicely poised that it rocks to and fro at the slightest touch. Beside it are one or two aged oaks, almost the only oaks in these woods. There is no mistletoe on them now. Ages ago, a Druid may have cut the last with his golden sickle. There is something pathetic in the aspect of these gnarled hoar old trees. Their leaves may have rustled in the ears of the captive maids and matrons of a vanquished and fading race; their acorns may have dropped on the mail of a Cæsar, their shade soothed the dying and sheltered the dead; yet there they stand amid the browsing sheep, mementoes of a past well-nigh forgotten, when Roman and Druid alike are gone, crowded out by the trooping memories and associations of the ages which have followed.

A little beyond the Roman road, a red 'scaur' stands out very distinctly from the soft swelling green of the opposite hill. It is called the Battle Brae; but except its name, there is no tradition to connect that scene of long-forgotten massacre with any known story. Men fought there and fell; but for once the harp of Fame was mute; they found neither minstrel nor historian to shadow forth the supreme tragedy of their lives to future ages. 'It is the Battle Brae,' the rustic tells you.—'What battle?' you ask.—'Eh, man, wha can tell?' he answers, and cheerily plods on, whistling as he goes; and I resume my pipe, and meditate as I smoke upon the fleeting nature of human glory.

At a bend of the stream below me, patient as the human angler under the sweeping birches, a heron stands, watching intently the reedy plashy margin of the water. Thus he has stood for hours in lonely dignity, a hermit among birds, waiting for his prey. As I watch him, a sympathetic freak of the imagination carries me back into the days when the solitary bird before

me played a much more important part on the world's stage than he does now. The wide breezy uplands are alive, as in the days of old, with the stir and bustle of a gallant company. Through the clump of green hawthorn, a gay cavalcade winds into the sunshine, knight and squire, and fair lady with falcon on wrist. I hear once more the merry clang of the hawk's bells; the brides ring as the impatient steeds toss their heads and curvet and paw the ground; the falconers utter their hoarse cries; the gallant stoops to utter in the ear of beauty his well-turned compliment. And beauty laughs carelessly; she has heard that phrase, or something like it—well, often. If he wanted appreciation, he should have sought an eye of dimmer lustre, a face less fair.

But now the heron rises in evident alarm, and with seeming awkwardness, as if he felt his legs uncomfortably long. A hawk is let loose, and away soar pursuer and pursued, lessening specks in the clear blue heaven. They bend their course to the hills, and the splendid pageant follows, picturesque in medieval breadth and warmth of colour, rich in waving plumes, in the gleam of mail, in the brave glitter of cloth of gold and velvet and miniver, which have long since been dust, like their wearers. But the steadfast hills still stand, brave sentinels of the perished centuries; and my heron stands also on his long blue legs beside the quiet stream, placidly fishing. The world has changed for the better for him; there is less of glory, perhaps, but there is decidedly more comfort. It is changing also now for me, but decidedly not in the direction of comfort; there is an ominous lull in the wind, and a rustle as if all the trees of the wood were taking counsel together, and then the sharp patter of drops on the leaves. A brisk shower; but it will not last long, for across the dark horizon streams a sudden gleam of sunshine, which lights up the cloudy sky, and trembles with wavering uncertain glimmer over the bluebells which cluster in the grass beside me. Some of them are pure white, and I gather them with a smile; for they are supposed, like white heather, to bring happiness to the fortunate finder.

I get up lazily. It seems as if it were going to rain in earnest. I look down at the two anglers; my human friend has moved a little, but my bird-friend still stands motionless in the same pose on the same spot. The rain is clearing off; the sun shines out again with a warm glow. A sweet resinous scent is on the wind; the shower has brought out all the latent fragrance of the woods. A gamekeeper strides past with his gun under his arm and his dogs at his heels, and flings me as he goes a cheerful good-day. As I watch his tall figure, lithe and handsome, the past returns to me under a different aspect. The little ruined Border 'peel' I can just see on the horizon stands square and erect once more, and frowns defiance to the world. A few cottages cluster under the bare lonely tower; an armed moss-trooper or two fording the shallow stream, drive before them a lowing herd of plundered cattle. An archer returns from the greenwood with the best half of a gallant buck on his shoulders. All is savage plenty where of late there was pinching want; loud sounds of rustic revelry fill the air; the shepherd tunes his pipe, and the milkmaid,

smoothing her fair hair, lilts a merry roundelay as she bends under the weight of the foaming pails.

The dun deer are gone now, like the other picturesque medieval accessories of the scene. You see them no more dappling the woodland glades or couching in the thickets of fern; but in their place there are herds of fine West Highland cattle, which seem to me almost the more picturesque animals of the two. Look at that herd feeding on the rising ground to the west; something startles them; how grandly they toss each shaggy front, and uttering low bellows, spurn the turf with impatient foot; then, with tails in air and lowered heads, set off in full career like mad creatures. It is not always safe for a stranger to meet them in one of these stampedes, especially if he has a dog with him. —Yes, Gyp, I was speaking of dogs, but not of you; you need not point your ears and look so preternaturally wise.

The autumn day is waning to its close; a veil of mist is beginning to shroud the peaks of the distant hills; the sun is setting behind me in a splendour of imperial purple; and in the flood of refulgent light I can see a commonplace figure enough, my distracted housekeeper, at the garden gate. A weariful woman she looks; her very attitude tells me that the hour of dinner is long past. I can almost hear her querulous whimper, 'I'm in a terror for the fish, sir.' Reluctantly I rise; a chaffinch twitters above me in mid-air; a mellow golden sheen lies on the grass, athwart which the scattered birch-trees cast long shadows. The angler is trudging homewards under the welcome weight of a heavy basket. I hope the heron was equally successful; he has been gone for some time to his roost in these lofty scattered trees on the hill-side. Gyp is whining impatiently; the sheep, slowly wending their way to the highest point of their pasturage, bleat at intervals. Below me, the stream gurgles through the glen with plaintive cadence; the cushat's long-drawn note falls tremulously on my ear. The silent night is advancing. As I pass homeward, darkness is beginning to enshroud this green pastoral world of solitude. I hear my friend's cheery voice; he has arrived before me; and I am fain to confess with him that a cheerful fire and a good dinner are no unwelcome termination to an October day among the woods and hills.

## MY SHIPMATE LOUISE.

THE ROMANCE OF A WRECK.

### CHAPTER XXIV.—CAPTAIN BRAINE.

AFTER three days of sailors' biscuit and strong cheese and marmalade of the flavour of foot sugar, the lump of cold salt beef that the captain's man set before me ate to my palate with a relish that I had never before found in the choicest and most exquisitely cooked meat; and a real treat, too, to my shipwrecked sensibilities was the inspiration of home and civilisation in the tumbler of foaming London stout. Miss Temple seemed too harassed, too broken down in mind, to partake of food; but by dint of coaxing and entreating I got her to taste a mouthful, and

then to put her lips to a glass of stout; and presently she appeared to find her appetite by eating, as the French say, and ended with such a repast as I could have wished to see her make.

When the man put the tray down, he went out, and the girl and I were alone during the meal. Now that I had recovered from the first heart-subduing shock of the discovery that the hull was on fire, and could realise that, even supposing she had not been set on fire, we had still been delivered from what in all probability must have proved a long, lingering, soul-killing time of expectation, dying out into hopelessness and into a period of famine, thirst, and death: I say now that I could realise our rescue from these horrors, my spirits mounted, my joy was an intoxication, I could have cried and laughed at the same time, like one in hysteria. I longed to jump from my chair and dance about the cabin that I might vent the oppression of my transports by movement. I was but a young man, and life was dear to me, and we had been in dire peril, and were safe! What a paradise was this cosy little cabin after that ghost-haunted, narrow crib of a deck-house! how soothing beyond all words to the nerves was the light floating rolling of the graceful little snow-white barque, under control of her helm, and vitalised in every plank by the impulse of her airy soaring canvas, compared with the jerky, feverish, staggering, tumblematication of the wreck, with its deadly deck leaning at desperate angles to the fang-like remnants of the crushed bulwarks, and its uncovered hatches yawning to the heavens, as though in a dumb mouthing of entreaty for extinction!

'Oh, Miss Temple,' I cried, 'I cannot bring my mind to believe in our good fortune! This time yesterday! how hopeless we were! And now we are safe. I thank God, I most humbly thank God, for His mercy. Your lot would soon have become a frightful one aboard that wreck.'

'Yet what would I give,' she exclaimed, 'if this ship were the *Countess Ida*! What is to become of us? For how long are we to wander about in a state of destitution, Mr Dugdale—mere beggars, without apparel, without conveniences, dependent for our very meals upon the bounty of strangers?' and she brought her eyes with the old flash in them from the table to my face, at which she gazed with an expression of temper and mortification.

'You would not be a woman,' said I, 'if you did not think of your dress. But, pray, consider this: that your baggage is now recoverable; whereas, but for this *Lady Blanche*—'

'Oh, but it would have been so happy a thing, that might so easily have happened too, had this vessel been the *Indiaman*.'

'Cannot you summon a little patience to your aid?' said I. 'Our strange-eyed captain spoke with judgment when he suggested the probability of your exchanging his ship for the *Countess Ida* within a week.'

'Well, I will be patient, if I can,' said she, looking down with an air of trouble and distress in the pout of her lip; 'but is it not about time that the adventure ended?'

'Suppose it may be only now beginning?'

She gave me a side-glance and exclaimed somewhat haughtily: 'I really believe, Mr Dugdale, you enjoy this sort of experiences; and if I were a man— But it *must* end!' she added with an air as though she was about to weep. 'It is unendurable to think of being carried about the world in this fashion. I shall insist—well, I shall bribe Captain Braine to question every ship he passes as to her destination, and the first vessel we encounter that is going home I shall go on board of.'

'Alone?' said I.

'No,' she answered, half-closing her eyes and looking a little away from me; 'you would not suffer me to travel alone, Mr Dugdale? Besides, do not you want to get home too?'

'I would rather find my way to Bombay,' said I. 'My baggage as well as yours is aboard the *Countess Ida*, and I should like to get it, though not at the cost of too much trouble. I am bound to India on a visit, and am not expected home for a good many months.—Now, I don't see why both of us shouldn't keep our appointments by sticking in this barque, and sailing in her to the Mauritius, whence we ought to be able without difficulty to ship ourselves for Bombay. The *Lady Blanche* has the hull of a clipper, and it will be strange if the pair of us are not ashore at Bombay some weeks before the *Countess Ida* sails.'

She listened with impatience, and when I had ended, said: 'If the chance offers, I shall certainly go home. I shall take the first ship that passes, though it should cost a thousand pounds to bribe Captain Braine and the commander of the vessel that receives me.—How is it possible for me to continue thus?' and here she looked at her dress.—'And where is Mauritius? Is it not nearly as far off as Bombay? Whereas England is not so very remote from this part of the ocean.'

'Well, Miss Temple, I am your humble servant,' said I; 'head as you will, I shall most dutifully follow you.'

'I beg that you will not be satirical.'

'God forbid!' said I, averting my eyes, for I was sensible that they were expressing more than I had any desire she should observe. 'I wish to see you safe, and meanwhile happy. If we pick up a ship homeward bound, we can commission Captain Braine to request Keeling, if he encounters him, to transfer our baggage to the first craft he speaks going to England.—Your aunt's maid will know all about your luggage.'

She watched me, as though doubtful whether I was joking or not; but I was cut short by the entrance of Captain Braine.

'I hope you have done pretty well?' he exclaimed, after gazing at us for a short time without speaking; 'it is poor fare, mem, for the likes of you. But the ship'll afford nothing fresh till we kill a pig.—What did you say your name was, sir?'

'Dugdale,' said I.

'Ha!' he cried, whilst he viewed me steadfastly, 'to be sure. Dugdale. That was it. Well, Mr Dugdale, there might be an edifying sight for you and the lady to behold from the deck.'

'What?' swiftly exclaimed Miss Temple with a start.

'The hull, mem, we took you from,' he replied in his hollow somewhat deep voice, 'is rapidly growing into a big blaze.'

Her face changed as to a mood of disappointment. I believe she thought that the captain had come to announce the Indianman in sight: I was about to speak.

'Captain Braine,' she said, approaching him by a dramatic stride, and exclaiming proudly, as though she would subdue him by her mere manner to acquiescence in her wishes, 'I am without wearing apparel, saving the attire in which you now view me, and it is absolutely necessary I should return home as speedily as possible. My mother will fear that I have perished, and I must be the bearer of my own news, or the report of my being lost may cause her death, so exceedingly delicate is her health. She is rich, and will reward you in any sum you may think proper to demand for enabling me to return to England quickly.'

An indescribable smile as she said these words crept over the man's face and vanished. I was strongly impressed by the expression of it, and observed him closely.

'Therefore, Captain Braine,' she proceeded, 'I have to entreat you to promise me that you will signal to the ships you may pass, and put me on board the first one, no matter what sort of vessel she be, that is sailing directly to England.'

He silently surveyed her, and then directed his eyes at me.

'You'll be wanting to get home too, sir, I suppose?' said he.

'Oh yes,' I replied. 'Miss Temple is under my care, and I must see her safe.'

He turned to her again, and stood staring; then said: 'That'll be all right, mem; we're bound to be falling in with something coming along presently; and if England's her destination and she'll receive ye, the boat that brought you from the hull shall take you to her, weather permitting.—That'll do, I think?'

She bowed, looking as pleased as agitation and anxiety would allow her.

'Come now and take a look at the hull,' continued Captain Braine; 'and then'—

'You quite understand, I hope,' she interrupted, 'that any sum'—

He broke in with an odd flourish of his hand.

'No need to mention that matter, mem,' he exclaimed; 'we are Christian men in that part of the country where I come from, and there's never no talk of pay amongst us for doing what the Lord directs—succouring distressed fellow-creatures.'

With which he spun upon his heels and walked out of the cabin, leaving us to follow him.

I had no eyes nor thoughts for anything else than the hull the moment I saw her. I remember recoiling as to a blow, and panting for a few breaths with my hand to my side. She had slipped to something more than two miles away down on the starboard quarter, and although only a portion of her was as yet on fire, she was showing as a body of flame brilliant and forked, soaring and drooping against the leaden-hued background of sky. Shudder after shudder went like ice through me as my sight swept the mighty girdle of the deep, coming back to the



little body of flame that most horribly to every trembling instinct in me accentuated the lonely immensity of the surface on which it glowed.

'Think—if we were on her now!' I muttered to Miss Temple. She hid her face.

'Was there any valleyables aboard her, Mr Dugdale, d'ye know?' said the captain.

'I cannot tell you,' I answered in a voice subdued by emotion; 'I did not search the sleeping-berths. There was little enough in her hold.'

'Ye should have crept away down in the run,' said he: 'that's where the chaps which peopled her would stow their booty if they had any. If I'd known she'd been a privateersman—How came ye to set her on fire?'

'My signal burnt through her deck, so I was informed by that gentleman there,' I replied, indicating the square man, who stood a little way from us.

'Was that so, Mr Lush?' cried the captain.

'Was what so?' asked Mr Lush.—The captain explained.—'Well, I dunno,' answered the other; 'there was fire in the hold when I looked down, and it seemed to me as if flakes of it was falling through the deck.—But what does it signify? Wood ain't cast-iron, and if ye makes a flare upon a timber deck, why, then what I says is, stand by!'

'Oh look, Mr Dugdale!' shrieked Miss Temple at that moment, tossing her arms in horror, and standing with her hands upraised, as though in a posture of calling down a curse upon the distant thing.

My eye was on the wreck, as hers had been, and I saw it all. There was a huge crimson flash, as though some volcanic head had belched in fire; daylight as it was, the stretch of clouds above and beyond the wreck glared out in a dull rusty red to the amazing stream of flame; a volume of smoke white as steam, shaped like a balloon, and floating solid to the sight, slowly rose like some phenomenal emanation from the secret depths of the ocean. Then followed the sullen, deep-throated blast of the explosion. Captain Braine snatched a telescope from the skylight and levelled it, and after peering a little, thrust the glass into my hand.

'See if you can find out where she's gone to,' said he with a singular grin, in which his eyes did not participate.

I looked: the water delicately brushed by the light wind flowed in nakedness under the shadow of the slowly soaring and enlarging cloud of white smoke. Not the minutest point of black, not the merest atom of fragment of wreck, was visible. I put down the glass with a quivering hand, and going to the rail, looked into the sea to conceal my moist eyes, too overcome to speak.

'A good job you weren't in that hull, mem,' said the captain to Miss Temple; 'it would be sky high with any one that had been there by this time. But you're aboard a tidy little ship now. If so be that you are at all of a nautical judge, mem, cast your eyes aloft and tell me if there's e'er an Indee-man or a man-of-war, too, if ye will, with spars stayed as my masts is, with such a fit of canvas, with such a knowing cocked-ear like look as the run of them yard-arms has, with

such mastheads tapering away like the holy spire of a meeting-house, and that beautiful little skysail atop to sarve as a cloud for any tired angel that may be flying along to rest upon! Ha!'

He drew so deep a breath as he concluded, that I turned to look at him. He stood gazing up at the canvas on the main as though in an ecstasy; his hands were crossed upon his breast after the manner of coy virgins in paintings; his right knee was crooked and projected; I could not have imagined so curious a figure off the stage. Indeed, I supposed he was acting now to divert Miss Temple. I glanced at the tough, sullen, storm-darkened face of old Lush, to gather his opinion on the behaviour of this captain; but his expression was of wood, and there was no other meaning in it that I could distinguish save what was put there by the action of his jaws as he gnawed upon a junk of tobacco, carrying his sight from seawards to aloft and back again as regularly as the swing of the spars.

Miss Temple drew to my side with a manner of uneasiness about her. She whispered, while she seemed to be speaking of the wreck, motioning with her hand in the direction of the smoke that was slowly drawing on to our beam in a great staring, still-compacted mass, white as fog against the leaden heaven: 'I believe he is not in his right mind.'

'No matter,' I swiftly replied; 'his ship is sound.—Captain,' I exclaimed, 'I hope you will have a spare cabin for this lady. For my part, you may sling me a hammock anywhere, or a rug and a plank will make me all the bed I want.'

'Oh, there's accommodation for ye both below,' he answered; 'there's the mate's berth unoccupied. The lady can have that. And next door to it there's a cabin with a bunk in it. I'll have it cleared out for you.—Come down and see for yourselves.'

He led the way into the little cuddy, as I may term it, and conducted us to a hatch close against the two sleeping berths right aft. He descended a short flight of steps, and we found ourselves in a 'tween-decks in which I should not have been able to stand erect with a tall hat on. It was gloomy down here. I could distinguish with difficulty a number of cases of light goods stowed from the deck to the beams, and completely blocking up all the forward portion of this part of the vessel. There were two cabins in the extremity corresponding with the cabins above, with such another small hatch as we had descended through lying close against them, but covered: the entrance as I took it to 'the run' or 'lazarette.' Captain Braine opened the cabin door on the port side, and we peered into a small but clean and airy berth lighted by a large scuttle. I noticed a couple of sea-chests, a suit of oilskins hanging under a little shelf full of books, a locker, a mattress and a bundle of blankets in the bunk, a large chart of the English Channel nailed against the side, and other matters of a like sort.

'You'll be able to make yourself pretty comfortable here, mem,' said Captain Braine.

'Are there any rats?' asked Miss Temple, rolling her eyes nervously over the deck.

'God bless us, no!' answered the captain. 'At

the very worst, a cockroach here and there, mem.'

'But this cabin is occupied,' said I.

'It was, young gentleman, it was,' he exclaimed, in a hollow raven voice, that wonderfully corresponded with his countenance, and particularly somehow or other with his hair—'it was my chief-mate's cabin. But he's dead, sir.' He gazed at me steadfastly, and added: 'Dead and gone, sir.'

Miss Temple slightly started, and with a hurried glance at the bunk, asked how long the man had been dead.

'Three weeks,' responded Captain Braine, preserving his sepulchral tone, as though he supposed it was the correct voice in which to deliver melancholy information.

'May I see the next cabin?' said Miss Temple.

'Certainly,' he answered; and going out, he opened the door.

This room was the same size as the berth which adjoined it; but it was crowded with an odd collection of sailmakers' and boatswains' stores, bolts of canvas, new buckets, scrubbing-brushes, and so on. There was a bunk under the scuttle full of odds and ends.

'I would rather occupy this berth than the other,' said Miss Temple.

'You're not afraid of ghosts, mem?' exclaimed the captain, fixing his immense dead black eyes upon her.

'I presume this room can be cleared out, and I prefer it to the other,' she answered haughtily.

I broke in, somewhat alarmed by these airs: 'Oh, by all means, Miss Temple. Choose the cabin you best like. Captain Braine is all kindness in furnishing us with such excellent accommodation.—This stuff can be put into my berth, if you please, captain. I shall merely need room enough to get into my bunk.'

'I'll make that all right,' he answered somewhat sulkily.—'How about bedding? The lady's a trifle particular, I fear. She wouldn't be satisfied to roll herself up in a dead man's blanket, I guess.'

'Leave me to manage,' said I, forcing a note of cheerfulness into my voice, though I was greatly vexed by Miss Temple's want of tact. 'There's more bedding than either of us will require in less than a bolt of your canvas. We are fresh from an experience that would make a paradise of your forepeak, captain.—And so,' said I, plunging from the subject, in the hope of carrying off the ill-humour that showed in his face, 'you are without a chief-mate?'

'I'll tell ye about that by-and-by,' said he. 'This here crib, then, is to be the lady's?—Now, what have I got that you'll be wanting, mem? There's a bit of a looking-glass next door. He use to shave himself in it. You won't mind that, perhaps? His image ain't impressed on the plate. It'll show ye true as you are, for all that he shaved himself in it.'

Miss Temple smiled, and said that she would be glad to have the glass.

'There'll be his hairbrush,' continued Captain Braine, 'though that might prove objectionable,' he added doubtfully, talking with his eyes fixed unwinkingly upon her. 'And yet I don't know; if it was put to soak in a bucket of salt-water, it

ought to come out sweet enough. There's likewise a comb,' he proceeded, taking his chin betwixt his thumb and forefinger and stroking it; 'there's nothing to hurt in a comb, and it's at your service, mem. If poor old Chicken were here, he'd be very willing, I'm sure; but he's gone—gone dead.'

He looked at Miss Temple again. I watched him with attention. He seemed to sink into a fit of musing; then waking up out of it in a sudden way, he cried: 'You've got no luggage at all, have ye, mem?'

'No,' responded Miss Temple with gravity.

'I'm sorry,' said he, 'that I didn't bring Mrs Braine along with me this voyage. She wanted to come, poor thing, observing me to be but very ordinary during most of the time I was ashore—very ordinary indeed,' he repeated, shaking his head. 'If she was here, we could manage.'

'Pray, give yourself no concern on that head, captain,' said I; 'we shall be falling in with the Indianan presently; and supposing the worst to come to the worst—what time do you give yourself for the run from here to the Mauritius?'

'I'm not agoing to say—I'm not agoing to say!' he cried with an accent of excitement that astonished me; 'what's the good of talking when you don't know?—Wouldn't it be a sin to go and make promises to people in your condition and disappoint 'em? I can just tell ye this: that Baltimore itself never turned out a keel able to clip through it as this here *Lady Blanche* can when the chance is given her.—And now,' he exclaimed, changing his voice, 'suppose we clear out of this, and go up into the daylight and fresh air;' and without pausing for an answer, he trudged off.

I handed Miss Temple up the ladder, and we gained the little cabin, or living-room as it might be termed. The young fellow who acted as steward or servant was busy at the glass-rack. The captain called to him, and peremptorily and most intelligently gave him certain instructions with respect to the clearing out and preparing of the berths below for our reception. He told him where he would find a spare mattress.—Quite new, never yet slept on,' he said, contorting his figure into a bow to Miss Temple—he had a couple of shawls and a homely old rug which had made several voyages, and these were to be put into her bunk; the man was to see that the lady lacked no convenience which the barque could afford. 'The late Mr Chicken's mattress was to be given to me along with his bedding, if so be that I was willing to use the same.' Other instructions, all expressive of foresight and hospitable consideration, he gave to the fellow, who then went forward to obtain help to clear out the cabins.

'We are deeply indebted to you, captain,' said I, 'for this very generous behaviour'—

'Not a word, sir, if you please,' he interrupted. 'I have a soul as well as another, and I know my duty.—Lady, a hint: you have some fine jewelry upon you; take my advice, and put it in your pocket.'

She was alarmed by this, and looked at me.

I smiled, and said: 'The captain of a ship is Lord Paramount; his orders must be obeyed, Miss Temple.'

Without another word she began to pull off

her rings, the skipper steadfastly watching her.

'Will you take charge of them for me, Mr Dugdale?' said she.

I placed them in my pocket. She then took off a very beautiful diamond locket from her throat, and this I also carefully stowed away.

'I will remove my earrings presently,' she exclaimed with a slight flush in her cheek and a sparkle as of ire in her gaze, though her lips still indicated an emotion of dismay.

'My advice to you is—at once, mem,' said the captain.

'We must believe that Captain Braine is fully sensible of the meaning of his requests,' said I, answering the glance she shot at me.

She removed the earrings and gave them to me. The captain stood running his eyes over her figure, then, with a melodramatic gesture, pointed to her watch. This, too, with the handsome chain belonging to it, I pocketed. He now addressed himself to contemplating me.

'You don't need to show any watch-chain,' said he, speaking with his head drooping towards his left shoulder; 'there's no good in that signet ring either. As to the breastpin,' he half-closed one eye—'well, perhaps that's a thing that won't hurt where it is.'

He waited until I had taken off my ring and dropped my chain into my waistcoat pocket, and then, looking first of all aft and then forward, then up at the little skylight, whilst he seemed to hold his breath, as though intently listening, he approached us, as we stood together, by a stride, and said in a low deep voice, tremulous with intensity of utterance: 'My men are not to be trusted.—Hush! If they imagined I suspected them, they would cut my throat and heave me overboard.'

Miss Temple took my arm.

'Let me understand you?' said I, wrestling with my amazement. 'In what sense are they untrustworthy?'

He stared eagerly and nervously about him again, and then extending the fingers of his left hand, he touched one of them after another, as though counting, whilst he said: 'First, I have reason to believe that Lush, the carpenter, who acts as my second mate, committed a murder four years ago.'

'Good God!' I ejaculated.

'Hold!' he cried. 'Next, there ain't no shadow of a doubt that two at least of my able seamen are escaped convicts. Next, there is a man forward who was concerned in a mutiny that ended in the ringleaders being hung. Next'—he paused, and then exclaimed; 'but no need to go on alarming the lady.'

'But were you not acquainted with these men's characters at the time of their signing articles?' said I.

'No, young man—no,' he answered with a most melancholy shake of the head; 'it's all come out since, and a deal more atop of it.—But hush! Discretion is the better part of valour, as Jack says. There's no call to be afraid. They know the man I am, and what's better, they know I know them.—Ye're quite safe, mem—only, don't be a tempting sailors of their sort by a sight of the valleyables you've been a-carrying about with you.—And now, perhaps you'll

excuse me whilst I goes and looks after the ship.'

He gave us another extraordinary bow—I never met with any posture-maker who approached this man in the capacity of distorting his person—and walked out of the cabin.

### THE HEART OF AFRICA.

THE attitude of suspicion and hostility immediately assumed by an African tribe or village on the arrival of a party of strangers in their vicinity is easily explicable by the condition of internecine warfare in which those savage communities pass their existence. The strong are continually preying on the weak, old feuds are constantly waging, insults are being avenged, and injuries resented.

Such is the general condition of a country in which no public law prevails except that of force. The approach of strangers is commonly too likely to be that of enemies. If, however, pacific assurances are given and supported by liberal presents, the travellers may succeed in disarming hostility, and may secure a passage for themselves, subject to more or less tribute to the cupidity of the chiefs. But whatever degree of satisfaction the chiefs and tribes may derive from the liberality of the strangers—this being usually in proportion to the amount of pressure put upon them—or how much soever the natives may be convinced that the objects of the white visitors are entirely pacific, the character of the men who undertake long and toilsome and costly expeditions for such objects—the discovery of a lake, of the source or course of a river, of a reported mountain, as the case may be—with the hardships, privations, and dangers incidental to such enterprises, must be a subject of considerable wonder and perhaps a certain mixture of pity. In 1863, when Sir Samuel Baker was in the Latooka country—which is situated in the eastern part of what were lately the Equatorial Provinces held by Emin Pasha—on his expedition for the discovery of the lake which he subsequently named Albert Nyanza, he attempted to make the chief, Commoro, understand his object so as to elicit some information that might be of assistance. But it was in vain. The chief said: 'Suppose you get to the great lake, what will you do with it? What will be the good of it? If you find that the large river [the White Nile] does flow from it, what then? What's the good of it?'

The impenetrability of the African chief was not very different in character, perhaps not even in degree, from the incapacity of large numbers of civilised persons at home to conceive an intelligent sympathy with the efforts of explorers. A good many of us feel a keener interest in the narratives of adventure themselves than in the scientific results to which they have been dedicated.

It was characteristic of British pluck and obstinacy not to let the problem of the Nile alone until it was solved. Sir Samuel Baker—accompanied every inch of the way by his wife—started up the river to pursue it to its source; at Gondokoro he met Speke and Grant coming down, after travelling all the way from Zanzibar with the same object. It was somewhat disconcerting to Baker, after the greatest part of his

journey had been done, to meet his plucky countrymen fresh from the discovery of the great Victoria Nyanza Lake; but there still remained the second lake westward, and this sufficed for Baker. He 'got there,' as the Americans say, and gratified the craving of his heart by finding the Albert Nyanza and the great river flowing northward out of it. This was the source of the Nile, and he was satisfied to turn homeward with the full sense of his task completed. Mr H. M. Stanley, however, as every one now knows, has just discovered that the White Nile has its source still farther south in yet another 'Nyanza'—the Albert Edward; and as the regions beyond this last-found lake to the south are unexplored, we may very soon expect to hear of some other British explorer making his resolute way thither in order to find out all about the back of the new lake, and whether or not the Nile is really run to earth.

The regions between the great lakes and the Bahr-el-Ghazal district were annexed to Egypt by Sir Samuel Baker in the years 1870-1873, in pursuance of the commission given to him by Ismail Pasha, with a view to the suppression of the slave-trade. This traffic had for years been carried on by the Khartoum traders, with the active connivance of the Egyptian authorities of the Soudan. Baker found all the country south of Khartoum leased by the Soudan Government to traders, who paid the Government a round sum per annum for the monopoly of the general and ivory trade of the regions assigned. These traders occupied districts and stations as far south as the neighbourhood of the lakes, and west of the White Nile as far as the Niam Niam and Monbuttu countries. In 1868, 1869, and 1870, Dr Schweinfurth, the distinguished German traveller, accompanied the 'Khartoumers' into the countries west of the Nile, and gives a full and interesting description of what he saw there. The traders soon found that there were more profitable ways of trading in this dark interior than by carrying goods up the Nile for barter. Their vessels left Khartoum with gunpowder instead of merchandise. They raided and laid waste the country in all directions, plundering the cattle of one tribe to exchange with another for ivory, and returning in due course to Khartoum with their vessels laden with ivory and slaves. Parties were left behind to carry on operations until the arrival of the boats at Gondokoro—the limit of navigation—the next season. At Fashoda, a station on the Nile where the river, after leaving the Equatorial Provinces, flows north to Khartoum, the governor levied a toll per head on all slaves carried down by the traders, and thus reaped his share of the atrocious trade. That Sir Samuel Baker was hindered in every way in their power by the government officials of the Soudan, as well as by the 'Khartoumers,' was a matter of course, and even his officers and soldiers mutinied against the duty. The work begun by Baker was afterwards carried on by Gordon and Emin Pasha, and the slave-trade in these regions almost entirely suppressed. Whatever the work was worth, it is now all lost, and to be done over again at some future day. The hordes of the Mahdi are in possession of the territories thus temporarily rescued from darkness and outrage.

All that a strong and regular government can

ever do for the tribes of Equatorial Africa—and it must be strong and regular to be of any value at all—is to give them peace and security to follow the simple industries with which they are acquainted. Some arts they may be taught, and in those which they know their knowledge can be improved, so that the comforts of life may be made more abundant for them. But it will be difficult to raise the negro of the Nile regions up to a higher moral and intellectual level. In childhood he is often more intelligent than the European, and shows delusive promise of future development; but as he grows the prospect fades, and the fact becomes apparent that at a certain point, very low in the moral and intellectual scale, his growth naturally stops. Family affection is almost entirely unknown, except that of the mother for her offspring. He is quite incapable of understanding our detestation of slavery except as applied to his own individual case; and the first desire of a freed slave is, as is well known, to procure a slave for himself. Domestic slavery prevails everywhere, and in tribal wars the reward of victory consists of captives and cattle, the former chiefly women and children; but the lot of the captives thus reduced to slavery—or rather subjected to a compulsory change of owners—is, as a general rule, no worse than it was before, and in no way bears comparison with the fate of the unfortunate beings who fall into the ruthless hands of the slave-traders.

The *razzias* of the Khartoum traders have ploughed their mark deeply in the countries bordering on the Equatorial Nile, and many of the smaller tribes have been displaced and ruined. But the few great divisions into which the inhabitants on either side of the river are classifiable still exist in more or less entirety. Hunting, cultivation, and fishing are the staple industries, though the first and last, owing to the rude methods and appliances employed, are precarious in their results. Of course there is considerable wealth of cattle, sheep, and goats in certain districts. The Latookas possess immense herds of cattle. It is a singular fact that some tribes, owning plenty of cattle, will suffer the severest starvation rather than kill one of the animals.

The Kytch tribe, on the right bank of the White Nile, furnish a curious illustration of the incomprehensible inconsistencies of the character of the negroes. These belong to what Dr Schweinfurth terms the *alluvial* or black type of negro, conforming in his colour to the soil on which he lives, and even corresponding in his postures—as that of resting on one leg—to the birds of the marshes, as well as in his leisurely long stride over the rushes, and his lean and lanky limbs and long thin neck. The Kytch tribe, however, are not so fortunate in their condition as their alluvial kindred the Shillooks, Nueir, and Dinka. They have large herds of cattle, but they will not sell one, nor will they kill it for food, nor do they taste meat except when an animal dies from sickness. Their misery is said to be beyond description. They will not work, and consequently they frequently starve, subsisting only on rats, lizards, snakes, and field-mice, which they spend hours in digging out from their burrows. Sometimes they catch a fish by spearing; how often they succeed in harpooning one



may be judged from their method, which is to throw the spear haphazard into the reeds on the chance of a fish happening to come in the way of it. It is little wonder that they are a tribe of skeletons, emaciated to mere skin and bone.

The Latookas are a fine race of men, with great numbers of cattle. It may be observed here that, as a general rule, a negro's two sources of wealth are his cattle and his daughters. The custom of the country gives the latter a settled value in so many head of cattle. A suitor has to purchase his wife from her father, so that if a girl is worth ten cattle, a man with a family of six daughters may regard himself as practically worth sixty cattle in respect of them. The custom has its good points about it. If the girl has no value in a suitor's eyes for her beauty or amiability, she has another value, which he must recognise before he obtains her; and this requiring a young man to pay a substantial price for his wife is a guarantee—or rather was perhaps originally meant to be one—of his industry and competence, qualifying him for the possession of a wife.

On the west of the White Nile the rearing of cattle gradually disappears in the districts to the south and south-west, inhabited by the Niam Niam and Monbuttu. It is here that we touch upon the region addicted to cannibalism, which extends through the forest zone to the Congo, Aruwimi, and Manyuema countries. It may be noted that amongst the other tribes of negroes north and east—especially east of the river—cannibalism is abhorred. The horrible practice appears to have come from the south. The districts in which it is followed are prodigal in nature's gifts, so much so, that the people find existence without toil to be so easy that they hardly cultivate the bountiful soil at all. Cattle do not exist, hardly are even sheep or goats to be found, and as a consequence, flesh of any kind is a luxury. The products of the chase being few and precarious, the theory has been advanced that the unsupplied craving for meat-food is responsible for the prevalence of cannibalism. So strong is the appetite for such unnatural fare, that Emin Pasha mentions the case of a freed captive belonging to one of those tribes as eagerly returning to the fare of his native country, being 'sick of beef' in the north.

Schweinfurth notices the singular correspondence, already referred to, between the physical character of the people and that of the locality which they inhabit. The alluvial tribes—the Dinka, Nueir, and Shillooks—of the lower districts are black; while on passing into the country of ferruginous soil inhabited by the Bongos, the skin begins to take a coppery hue. There is, however, on the whole, little distinction in point of feature or colour observable amongst the various tribes. The distinguishing characteristics are mainly found in the shape of their huts, their personal ornaments—not clothing, which is a *quantité négligeable*—and the manner of dressing their hair. The circular form of hut is universally found among the tribes of Central Africa, subject, however, to a variety of form in respect of the roof. A Shillook village looks from a distance like an immense bed of mushrooms. The Dinka huts are drawn up to a

point on the apex of the roof, and are generally large and spacious. The Dyook roof is a simple pyramid of straw; the Bongo is conical, and so on. As regards ornaments, these are chiefly rings of iron or copper worn on the arms, legs, necks; sometimes a woman wears half a hundred-weight of metal going about her daily labour. The mutilations practised on their bodies by both sexes are very numerous. Tattooing is frequent; the abstraction of the low incisor teeth almost universal; and the ladies sedulously enhance their beauty by inserting pieces of stone or metal through their lips, noses, and ears, producing results most abhorrent to the civilised eye. In the matter of dress, abundance of cow-dung, ashes, earth, and grease, well rubbed into the skin, produces the most desirable results. Hair-dressing is a fine art among these savages, but it is a form of vanity generally confined to the male sex. Every tribe has a distinguishing fashion of doing up the hair. To perfect the coiffure of a man requires a period of from eight to ten years in some fastidious tribes, and the process is almost too elaborate for description.

The aborigines of Central Africa, if very low in the moral and intellectual scale, are not without a self-acquired proficiency in some of the arts that is very striking. The manner in which they smelt iron—ignorant of the use of charcoal—and work it into spear-heads, rings, &c., is calculated to strike a European smith with wonder. Their appliances are of course of the most primitive character, and they seem incapable of improving them. No European smith could, with a couple of stones for hammer and anvil, fashion such workmanship as these untutored savages turn out of their rude smithies. In the art of pottery, too, which is chiefly the work of the women, their skill is often extraordinary, and generally remarkable. If we go farther south, among the natives of Unyoro and Uganda—lying between the two great lakes Victoria and Albert—the proficiency of the people in the domestic arts is still more striking. Their pottery is various and admirable, their mats are beautifully woven, and the celebrated bark-cloth—made from the bark of the fig-tree of Uganda—is a manufacture unequalled in Africa. The Waganda, inhabiting the western shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza, are a very nautical people, and possess a large fleet of canoes; these vessels, however, from the prevailing ignorance of carpentry, are held together with thongs instead of nails or other fastenings used by civilised shipbuilders. The Waganda, it should be remarked, are a race very superior to that of the negro pure and simple; and in the arts of life, in agriculture, and in social organisation, are far ahead of any other race in the interior of Africa.

The darkest portion of Africa is probably that which lies to the west of the central lakes as far as the Congo. This region is given up to the slave and ivory hunters and all the horrors attending on the infamous trade. It will be a good day for Africa when the supply of ivory is exhausted, as it is the ivory trade which chiefly causes the slave-trade. The Arabs have no other carriers to convey their ivory from the interior to the coast except the slaves that they capture on their bloody raids. When the wretched cap-

tives have carried the ivory to the coast, they are sold or exported, thus realising an additional profit for their captors. No ivory can now be procured east of the chain of lakes, except in the comparatively virgin forests of the new British territory, where, fortunately, the slaver will not be permitted; and to the west the elephant is gradually and surely disappearing owing to the wanton destruction caused by the trade. When there is no more ivory to be got in the interior, the slave-traffic will soon wane, for the services of captives as carriers will no longer be in demand. The gradual advance of railroads and steamboats will do the rest, as far at least as the carrying system has been responsible for the slave-trade.

### THE BOSS OF THE YELLOW DOG.

A WESTERN STORY.

#### PART II.

AWAY on the western slope of the great Rocky Mountains, in the wildest and, apparently, most unapproachable part of the State of Nevada, is a deep gorge or canyon. It is only a couple of hundred yards wide, and in the spring-time half of that narrow width is occupied by a rushing torrent, formed by the melting snow as it pours from the giant hills. The sides of the canyon rise perpendicularly to a height of nearly fifteen hundred feet; while abrupt bends to the north and south, a thousand yards apart, help to give the gorge the appearance of a mammoth grave. Standing by the little stream, across which one can easily step in summer-time, nothing can be seen but the solid walls of rock on all sides and the deep-blue sky above. Even from the highest elevation of those mountain precipices the eye rests upon nought but tier beyond tier of rugged hills, capped in the distance by lofty snow-clad peaks full a hundred miles away.

It is difficult to grasp the enormous extent of the territory occupied by the Rocky Mountain ranges—those great sierras which stretch the entire length of America, and spread across it, east and west, more than a thousand miles.

Mountains ten hundred miles to the south; mountains two thousand miles to the north; mountains to the east, and mountains to the west, hem in the little canyon, and ten years ago scarce a white man knew of its existence. At the present time it is linked to civilisation by a line of Concord coaches, which make weekly trips to the Central Pacific Railway, a hundred and fifty miles away. For to-day rich capitalists, busy stockholders, and rough miners are interested in the secluded canyon. Out of that rocky gorge many tons of rich silver ore have been taken; and on 'Change at San Francisco the Yellow Dog Silver Mine is now a name familiar as 'Erie Railway' or 'Panama Canal.'

In 1885 the Yellow Dog 'boom' was at fever heat. Every available foot of space in the canyon—or Gulch, as the miners call it—was occupied by tents, shanties, huts, and all other conceivable forms of dwelling-places which could possibly be erected in from ten minutes to ten

hours. Men of all nationalities arrived on foot and on horseback, as well as by every coach, armed with picks, shovels, hammers, drills, buckets, &c., not to mention the orthodox bowie-knife and pocket gun, which articles are considered as essential to a man's outfit as wearing-apparel in the Far West.

Of course, the Yellow Dog—the origin of which unpoetic and truly American name is lost in oblivion—was discovered and worked for some years in a desultory manner by a few hardy pioneer adventurers. Then a strong syndicate of rich mining men was formed in San Francisco, and the Yellow Dog was mined on scientific and business principles. But its assured success brought many more adventurers, eager to explore the adjacent territory. A few were successful to a greater or lesser degree: more failed, but all helped, with the employees of the Yellow Dog Mining Company, to swell the heterogeneous population of Blue Rocket Gulch, until, in the year above mentioned (1885), the rock-girt gorge contained nearly a thousand men and—three women.

A thousand men: Yankees, Canadians, and Mexicans; Saxons and Celts; Africans and Chinese; Jews and Gentiles—and only three women! Yet these three women embraced almost as much variety of moral character as did the larger and more cosmopolitan assemblage of men; that is to say, the women were good, bad, and indifferent. For the good, there was old Aunt Ruth, a whole-souled and very religious darkey, who nursed 'the boys' when they were sick, and did a hundred little things about the camp such as only a handy, experienced, and kind-hearted woman could perform. By contrast, there was Mother Bone, a Western woman of the very worst type, through whose French blood there coursed a strong strain of Hebrew. She presided over the one whisky-dive and gambling den which the camp boasted, and managed to reap a harvest of silver shekels from the boys whether they were, financially, on the up or the down grade. And then a young person, whose moral and social status it would have taken an entire court-room of Philadelphia lawyers to determine, was Seph—just *Seph*, no more and no less.

Who Seph was, whence she came, and whither she might eventually drift, were questions which never once agitated the minds of the miners in the Gulch, and even Seph rarely gave a thought to herself, past, present, or future. She was Seph: she was part and parcel of the Yellow Dog Mine. So far as Seph and the miners were concerned, these two undeniable facts were as satisfactory as a coat-of-arms and three pages in Burke's *Peerage* might be to some scion of an old British family.

For the benefit of such as never enjoyed the privilege of crushing quartz in the Blue Rocket Canyon, we may add that Seph, then a little girl seven or eight years old, came to the Gulch with her father, who was one of the first pioneers in search of silver. In the early history of the mine he was killed by a premature explosion of blasting-powder, leaving his little girl in that strange out-of-the-world corner to the tender mercies of his rough comrades. Seph's father left no word as to who he was or whence he

came, and the child was quite ignorant of both home and mother. So 'the camp' adopted Seph. And if it was a rough, wild, uncultured crowd—a crowd that included men who had been gamblers, cut-throats, and highway robbers—Seph was well cared for. The boys built a little cabin for her sole use; they furnished her with clothing and girlish trinkets—bought at unheard-of prices in Frisco—and waited on her every need. Refined society of her own sex Seph never missed, simply because she had never known it. Perhaps she instinctively appreciated her own peculiar position, which gave her an almost autocratic sway over so many men; for all those rough fellows admired Seph, and rude and uncouth as they were, never an insult by word or deed had been offered the girl in all the eight years in which she had resided in Blue Rocket Gulch.

Seph was now sixteen years old, and a most beautiful girl—a magnificent specimen of a Western maiden. She was bright as she was handsome, and, though a stranger to all that goes to make up an 'accomplished' young lady of the present day, she was no dunce. She could read and write; she was witty and keenly sensitive; in short, she was 'smart.' Only, at sixteen, it would have puzzled any one to decide whether Seph was more woman or child.

In the autumn of 1885 news reached the Gulch, by way of a letter from San Francisco to the manager of the mine, that the Yellow Dog Mining Company had sold out its entire interests to one man, who would immediately take possession.

A solitary horseman was wending his way along the narrow mountain track which did duty for a coach-road between Blue Rocket Gulch and the railway. It was about two hours after noon on a late summer day, and the sun was beating its merciless rays upon the traveller's head and shoulders. So searching was the heat that his broad-brimmed straw hat formed little or no protection, while the rocky wall to the left of the horseman only served to intensify the scorching rays. He was a man of powerful physique, with a handsome face and pleasant eyes, the latter betraying just a tinge of sadness. Judged by his hair, which was iron gray, he might have been taken for a man fifty years old at least, though a closer inspection would have led one to the conclusion that the white hairs were premature. As a matter of fact, the traveller lacked two years of forty.

Strong and vigorous as he naturally was, the man was tired, for this was his second day in the saddle, and the temperature was somewhere up in the nineties. So, when he perceived a niche in the rocky mountain side—the first he had noticed since morning—which made a shady spot about six feet by four, he dismounted and, after hobbling his horse, lay down to rest.

The setting sun was casting long shadows athwart the mountains when our traveller awoke from a refreshing sleep. The first object upon which his eyes rested was the nozzle of his own heavy revolver held within a yard of his face, while a musical voice exclaimed: 'Throw up your hands, Mr Tenderfoot! I've got the dead drop on you!'

'So I perceive,' quietly remarked the man, as he mechanically elevated his hands, conscious of the fact that there are stranger things than petticoated highway robbers in Nevada. Yet he could hardly persuade himself that the girl before him was bent on mischief. She appeared to him so pretty and so winsome, so girlish and so frank; besides which, he thought he could detect a merry twinkle in her dark eyes.

'Yes,' he said, 'you caught me napping.—What next?'

'Hand over! You may take down one hand at a time to clean out your pockets.'

A gold watch, a tolerable sum of money, some letters and papers, soon lay in a pile between the man and his fair captor. These the girl gathered in her lap, and then proceeded to remove the cartridges from the revolver, with which she had covered the traveller while he delivered up his effects. 'There,' she said, as she tossed the now harmless weapon to the man, 'I guess, considering that this is my first attempt of the kind, that I've done the trick in good shape. Let me see: six twenties, three tens, and three fifties—three hundred dollars, and a gold ticker. I'm no slouch if I do wear petticoats! Guess you won't go to sleep again on the coach-road, and that within three miles of the Yaller Dorg, in a hurry, Mr Greenhorn!'

But while the young lady was counting her ill-gotten wealth, the stranger had reloaded the revolver and quickly reversed the order of things. 'Throw up *your* hands, Miss Smarty! It's my turn now.'

Up went the girl's hands, while a queer look of chagrin overspread her pretty features. 'Ah,' she said in tones of genuine disappointment. 'Of course I was only fooling; but I wanted to play a good joke and do it up brown. Now the joke's on me! I'll take back everything I said about you being a tenderfoot, though—and here she showed her woman's nature in qualifying an apology—'I still think you were very foolish to fall asleep near the road.'

'Yes; I know it was unwise, though I had no idea that I was so close to the camp. Well, you just bring back my belongings and place them in the pockets from which I took them, and we will put the pistol away and be good friends.'

With her own hands she replaced the various articles. In such close proximity the man was enabled to look well into the open countenance of the girl, the result being that he was more favourably impressed than ever. On her part, the girl, to use an expression of her own, was 'dead-mashed' on the stranger with his handsome sun-burnt face, his broad shoulders, and erect carriage.

'Bet I know who you are!' merrily cried the girl, recovering from her temporary depression of spirits caused by the failure of her joke.

'Well?' queried the man, rather amused and glad enough to fall in with so novel and pleasant a companion.

'You're the new boss of the Yaller Dorg; and I'm Seph!'

It was a queer introduction in more ways than one. Be it remembered that, although she could read and write to some extent, Seph was an utter stranger to Lindley Murray or any other exponent of 'orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody.' The ungrammatical yet quaint lingo of the miners

was the only spoken language known to Seph, and she was an adept in the use of Western slang.

Long years afterwards, when she was well versed in the three *Rs* as well as many other accomplishments, Seph invariably spoke of the 'Yaller Dorg,' from strong force of habit.

'Oh, that's it, is it? I'm the boss of the Yaller Dorg! And, pray, why do you think so?'

'Cause down to Reddy Gallagher's (Reddy runs the post-office, and I tend it for him sometimes when he is busy on his claim) I saw a letter yesterday for Frank Sanborn, Esquire, Yellow Dog Mine, Blue Rocket Gulch, Nevada. Reddy told me that was for the new boss, and I've just seen some letters of yours with the same name.'

'Very well. I'll confess to being Frank Sanborn.—So you are Seph. That's a new name to me, though I don't half dislike it or its owner. Still, Seph is very short, and I am rather eager for explanatory information. Suppose, Miss Seph, that I get my horse? We can then walk towards the camp and talk as we go.'

So Frank Sanborn mounted his horse, as Seph utterly refused to do so, and with the girl tripping at his side, pursued his journey. He plied the maiden with a number of questions, which elicited more or less direct replies.

No; she could not explain the origin of her odd name, except that Reddy Gallagher, the post-master had suggested it might be an abbreviation of Josephine. She could not tell just how old she was, though she guessed about sixteen. No; she did not hanker after women and girls; she was happy enough with the boys. Yes; she liked all the boys first-rate; they were all good to her. Did not know just what a sweetheart was; but if it was anything like a 'best fellow,' she must admit that she liked Frisco Johnny somewhat better than the rest; at least, she thought she did, and she was quite sure Johnny was a little bit 'gone' on herself. Well, Johnny 'just was' a nice fellow—almost too good for the rough mine-work—and only a boy of twenty.

So she chatted away; and when, in less than an hour, Frank Sanborn and his pretty companion entered the camp, this man, who had travelled heart-whole the world over, who had known fair women of four continents with unconcern, now found himself, for the first time in his life, interested in feminine beauty in the person of a little Western waif.

#### NATURAL BAROMETERS.

FROM the earliest times, observations have been made on the signs exhibited by members of the animal world indicative of changes in the weather. Rain and storms have been predicted by asses frequently shaking and agitating their ears; by dogs rolling on the ground and scratching up the earth with their forefeet; by oxen lying on their right side; by animals crowding together; by moles throwing up more earth than usual; by bats sending forth their cries and flying into houses; by seafowl and other aquatic birds retiring to the

shore; by ducks and geese flying backwards and forwards and frequently plunging into the water; by swallows flying low, &c. While fine weather has been foretold by the croaking of crows in the morning; by bats remaining longer than usual abroad and flying about in considerable numbers; by the screech of the owl; and by cranes flying very high, in silence, and ranged in order. (In our issue of October 31, 1885, we gave an account of some observations by a German philosopher on the warning given through bees, by their becoming excited and irritable, of the approach of a thunderstorm, when the meteorological instruments have afforded no indication of it.) Mr White, in his *Natural History of Selborne*, when detailing the general manners of the land tortoise in a state of domestication in this country, says: 'No part of its behaviour ever struck me more than the extreme timidity it always expresses with regard to rain: for though it has a shell that would secure it against the wheel of a loaded cart, yet does it discover as much solicitude about rain as a lady dressed in all her best attire, shuffling away on the first sprinklings, and running its head up in a corner. If attended to, it becomes an excellent weather-glass, for as sure as it walks elate, and as it were on tiptoe, feeding with great earnestness, in a morning, so sure will it rain before night.'

A small fish about ten inches long, called the great loche or loach, a native of Germany and other midland parts of Europe, where it inhabits large lakes and marshes, is observed on the approach of stormy weather to be unusually restless, quitting the muddy bottom in which it generally resides, and swimming about near the surface of the water. It has therefore been sometimes kept by way of a living barometer, since, when placed in a vessel of water with some earth at the bottom, it never fails to predict the approach of a storm by rising from the bottom of the vessel and swimming about in an unquiet manner near the surface. When kept for this purpose, it should be provided with fresh water and earth two or three times a week in summer; and once a week, or once in ten days in winter. It must also be kept during frosty weather in a warm room. Another species, the Spiny Loche, Dr Bloch informs us, on being placed in a glass of river-water with a quantity of mud, showed an exactly opposite disposition, since it moved about briskly during calm weather instead of remaining still.

The Tree-Frog (*Rana arborea*), also a native of many European countries, but not of England, during its residence among the trees is observed to be particularly noisy on the approach of rain, more especially the males, which, if kept in glasses and supplied with proper food, will afford an infallible presage of the changes of weather. In the German *Ephemerides Naturæ Curiosorum* is an account of one which was kept in this manner for the space of seven years.

If a leech be kept in a glass phial about three-fourths filled with water it will serve a similar purpose. Thus, so long as the weather continues serene, the leech lies motionless at the bottom of the phial, rolled in a spiral form; should it rain,



it is found at the top of its lodging, where it will remain until the weather improve. If we are to have wind, the leech gallops about its limpid habitation with amazing swiftness, and seldom rests until it begins to blow hard. If a remarkable storm of thunder or rain is to succeed, for some days before it lodges almost continually without the water and exhibits great uneasiness, in violent throes and convulsive-like motions. In frost, as in clear summer weather, it lies constantly at the bottom; and in snow, as in rainy weather, it dwells at the very mouth of the vessel, which should be covered at the mouth with a piece of linen rag, and the water should be changed once a week in summer, and once a fortnight in winter.

Those who keep an aquarium can also know when to expect fair or foul weather by noticing if their sea-anemones are open or shut. An ingenious author, commenting on these signs exhibited by animals, once observed, that 'by means of barometers we may regain the knowledge which still resides in brutes, and which we have forfeited by not continuing in the open air as they generally do, and by our intemperance corrupting the crisis of our organs of sense.'

Certain plants undoubtedly display a certain degree of sensitiveness to atmospheric conditions, such as the Marigold and Bindweed, which shut up on the approach of rain; and the Pimpernel, known, consequently, as 'the poor man's weather-glass;' not to mention those which by closing at a certain hour of the day enable us to construct those pretty floral clocks, by planting them in a circle according to the well-ascertained times of their waking and going to sleep. At the Jubilee Flower Show, opened at Vienna in May last, was exhibited one of the Mimosa family, reported to be so extremely meteorometric as to fold its leaves forty-eight hours in advance of a change in the weather.

The forecasting of the weather by the bubbles in a cup of coffee, which was ventilated some thirty years ago in the columns of a Paris newspaper, and some fifteen years later in a German novel entitled *Solange*, has again been brought to the front. To explain their action we cannot do better than repeat verbatim the observations of the writer who has revived the subject recently in the *Standard*:

SIR—Your article on the animal characteristics possessed by the vegetable kingdom reminds me of an extraordinary phenomenon that I have witnessed every morning for the last four or five years—a natural barometer, locally far more reliable than any 'weather forecasts,' or the most expensive artificial barometer, and yet so simple that it is within the reach of every family. With my breakfast I drink coffee mixed with milk. When poured into the cup I gently drop in the lumps of loaf sugar, and shortly after the fixed air in the sugar rises to the top in small detached bubbles. Now watch these: I call them my little people, who will tell me if it is going to rain or not; and although the coffee is perfectly still, these little bubbles will be on the move, almost like life. It will be noticed that if it is going to rain very hard they will almost rush over to the side of the cup—as much as to say, I shall get under shelter as quickly as possible.

If the rain is only to be a gentle downfall, then the bubbles all meet together, evidently to deliberate on the matter, and then quietly move over to the side; but if it is not going to rain, every bubble that comes up remains stationary in the middle of the cup. Now, for all these years these little people have not deceived me a dozen times altogether, but have acted somewhat marvellously. On one occasion, a most lovely morning, with every sign of a fine day, I remarked, what can be the matter with the coffee this morning, as it showed signs of wet. Before twelve o'clock came, down poured the rain, to the astonishment of every one; and I could relate many other such instances. I cannot anyhow explain why this should be so, but I have found it not only a source of amusement and wonder but a most valuable guide for the day.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,  
H. D. C.

WINCHESTER, April 5, 1889.

Among subsequent letters endorsing the foregoing, was one signed 'Doulos,' who has never known the test fail for fifty years. The main condition is, that the observations be made in the morning, when atmospheric influences will have every chance of fair-play, and if the window be open so much the better. If they be made in the evening, in an artificially heated atmosphere, true prophecies cannot be expected.

#### MY WEAK POINT.

It's a very curious thing. I don't know how to account for the tendency; but nothing ever happens that I don't at once begin drawing inferences from it; and in the same way, when anything that ought to happen does not, I soar immediately into the infinite regions of the Possible, and revel in deductions, always logically arrived at, but invariably wrong. I am not conceited about it; but I never met any one so hopelessly given to the practice as I am. It is just as well. I prepare for myself a vast amount of unnecessary disappointment, and this world provides quite enough of that for most of us without self-accorded aid.

I sometimes think my proneness thus to draw inferences must be hereditary; my parents were great at it, so it is possible I got it from them. It was quite wonderful how much they could deduce from a little thing. For instance, when I was a small boy, I developed a mania for consuming bread and butter at odd hours, and reading books beyond my comprehension. I used to combine these occupations, and preferred to indulge in them when I ought to have been at play. For a long time my parents regarded these pursuits with a lack of sympathy; my mother docked my pocket-money as often as I was reported to have 'cut a new loaf;' and my father pointed sternly to the compressed dabs of butter with which I embellished the pages of his best books. I was driven perforce to eat and read in secret.

But one fine day a change came over the spirit of my parents. The change lay in their sudden adoption of a totally different course of treatment. My taste was discovered to be not only harmless but eminently praiseworthy, and I was not only

permitted to read and eat, but warmly encouraged to do both. I puzzled over it a good deal before—in the course of my reading—I traced this happy change to its source. My father had been hearing anecdotes of Lord Macaulay, and had discovered, or been told, that the story of his childhood furnished an exact parallel to mine. The infant Thomas loved to sit in corners eating bread and butter and devouring books whose contents he could by no possibility understand. He avoided his playfellows, and sat all by himself reading under shady trees, precisely as I was wont to do. To my parents, the deduction to be drawn from these striking coincidences was obvious: another Macaulay had been born in me. As soon as they realised this, the doors of the pantry and library were thrown open, and the housemaid received orders to supply me with bread and butter *ad libitum* on demand. I took full advantage of my opportunities, and only wished that my great predecessor had expressed a preference for bread and jam. I ascertained when too late that the youthful Macaulay had a rooted antipathy to going to school, and that compulsory attendance was eventually found to do him no good. It was a lasting regret to me that my father had not made this really valuable discovery when he made the other. I have called Lord Macaulay my predecessor; he was regarded in this light at that time; but, long since, it has been generally acknowledged that his reputation is in no danger of eclipse by mine. It is not my fault that the authors of my being have been disappointed. They drew an inference, and it was wrong.

As it was with my forebears so is it with me now, and has been for as long as I can remember. One particular case stands out like a landmark; it owes its prominence solely to the fact that it was the first of its own especial kind, and that is why I select it from the ten thousand instances of reasoning from insufficient data, to which I am adding every day. It was when I proposed to the first of the only girls I ever loved. I wrote in a strain of devoted humility (which was right and proper, since she was twelve years my senior), laying my hand and fortune—salary of sixty pounds a year—at her feet. How I watched the postman for the next few days! One day passed, but there came no reply; two days dragged by, and three and four, but she answered not.

'She is considering it,' I said to myself. 'Courage! She can't make up her mind, and wants time! Think what a flutter she must be in, and possess your soul in patience. She is wavering; and when a woman wavers she is lost—that is, gained, won, conquered!'

But she wasn't. I saw her on the evening of the sixth day, and she said she had quite forgotten my letter; she *was* so sorry. And then she laughed!

And I—I, unhappy one, sneaked away out of the house, feeling in my pockets for twopence to take the bus to Westminster Bridge. Life was not worth living, of course. I groaned as I passed out of the Terrace, for I had decided upon taking the corner house, that *she* might be near her mother. It seemed as though the staring 'To Let' over the door had been left there on purpose to remind me of it. I know better than to draw

any inference from a girl's omission to answer a letter now; but for the life of me I can't help doing it sometimes.

Another time I built a whole town in the air on the strength of a letter from the publisher who has helped and guided me on my literary career, and has paid for my maiden efforts with the generosity of a rich uncle. 'Can you spare time to run up and see me to-morrow?' he wrote; 'I should like to speak to you.' I replied by return of post that I would be with him at noon next day, and went to bed speculating. Was he going to commission me to do a three-volume novel? Hardly probable; even to my capacity of belief, that didn't seem likely. Then, as I pondered over the riddle, I suddenly solved it to my own complete satisfaction. Jones, that publisher's sub-editor, had been looking seedy lately: he'd got a nasty cough, and had complained of his eyes. It was as plain as a pike-staff: Jones had been pensioned, and I was to succeed him. Now, what salary should I ask? Jones got six hundred pounds, I knew. I couldn't expect so much as that, but I would ask four hundred, and take three if I were offered it. I could manage very nicely on three hundred pounds a year. Lodgings in Charlotte Square, and—and—then perhaps I might venture to speak to the then 'her.' To acceptance and marriage was a brief step, and having settled it all I fell asleep. Next morning I went up to my publisher's office, and as I wiped my boots on the door-mat, I resolved to take the sub-editorship at two-fifty.

When I got in, the publisher said: 'I thought I'd ask you to come and see me about that last little thing of yours. There are some excellent points in it, some excellent points; but I'm afraid—I'm afraid'—

I forget how I got outside again.

The habit is chronic, and incurable as consumption. Twenty years ago, an aunt of mine said something to me about her will—something very commonplace and casual; any sensible fellow would have forgotten it ten minutes afterwards. I didn't; I weighed the remark, and turned it about; and having, as I supposed, accurately outlined the train of thought that gave it words, drew the inference that I was to be her heir. I put that inference away in a corner of my mind, and whenever I was hard up or in the blues, I pulled it out and furbished it up, and got consolation and comfort from it. That aunt died the other day; but my name wasn't even mentioned in her will. And yet, a week ago, because another aunt said something of the same kind, I am at it again! drawing inferences and deductions which range from a fifty-pound legacy to the dear old lady's entire fortune. I know I oughtn't to do it. But I was born with this hopeful nature, and I suppose shall die with it. I trust, however, that I may outgrow the habit, for it has done me little good until now.

And yet I don't know. When the Present treats you hardly, and the Past has not been kind, is it not well to cozen the Future into promising better things, if it gives you courage to press forward? I have been wrong all my life, and that is poor reason for thinking I shall be right at last. But leave me Hope as long as

she will 'stay. Let me bury 'the might-have-beens' out of Memory's sight and borrow what I can from 'may be.' This habit of inferring is one of Hope's children; a thriftless child at best; but its mother will die one day, so let me nurse the child. It will bring forth only disappointments; but they, when they are many, are shortlived, with little power to pain.

#### DATE-PACKING AT MUSCAT.

MUSCAT is situated on the south-east coast of Arabia, about ninety miles to the northward of Cape Ras-el-Had. It is the chief town of South-eastern Arabia, and the capital of the province of Oman, which is ruled by the Sultan of Muscat. It is most easily reached by the steamers of the British India Steam Navigation Company, which run there fortnightly from Karachi. In former days Muscat was an important trade-centre, being a mercantile depôt for the whole of the Persian Gulf; but circumstances have altered with the times, and Muscat is no longer the flourishing port that it was. One industry, however, has certainly not been adversely affected by outside influences, and that is the cultivation of the date. The trade in dates is now by far the most important item of commerce at this out-of-the-way spot. Large quantities of this fruit are exported every year; and a description of the date-packing as carried on at Muscat may, I hope, prove not uninteresting.

There are ways and ways of packing, of course, and the primitive method of stamping the fruit into baskets with the feet is employed for the local trade, which is mostly with India. The bulk of the foreign trade is with America, and the bulk of the American trade is with a certain large Boston firm, for whom the dates are prepared in a far more scientific and satisfactory manner than that alluded to above.

Before the commencement of packing operations, which take place in August, September, and October, large quantities of wooden boxes are shipped to Muscat, together with hoop-iron and wax-paper to match, the use of which will be seen presently. The boxes are made in England, and stamped with the name of the firm and the name of the variety of date which they will afterwards contain. The lids also bear an ideal picture of date-trees. They are made of plain deal, and measure when made up about fifteen inches in length by ten inches in width and a foot in depth, and they hold about twenty-eight pounds of dates. In order to save space on board ship, they are not made up in England, but are sent out in bundles of sides, tops, and bottoms. On arrival at Muscat, numbers of carpenters are engaged to nail up the boxes, the nails being the only articles purchased locally. The hoop-iron is kept till the box is filled and ready for fastening. The scene of operations is at Muttrah, a suburb about three miles from Muscat, and reached most easily by sea. The packing takes place in a huge irregular-shaped shed or 'godown,' divided in the centre lengthways by a thick wall, on which rest the ends of heavy iron girders which have come all the way from England. The roof is flat, and covered by a light structure of date branches, to give shelter from the fierce rays of the autumn sun.

On entering the ground-floor the first thing one notices is a huge mass of black stuff lying in a vast heap from one end of the building to the other. This black-looking stuff proves on examination to be dates: it is like a sea of dates! This portion of the godown is devoted to the produce as it comes from the interior where it is grown. In one corner are seen a number of date-bags not yet opened. They are placed here for inspection, and subsequent weighment and purchase if found good. If the quality appear doubtful, the consignment is rejected. After approval and purchase, the baskets are emptied and returned to their owners, the dates being spread out over the floor in a mass two or three feet thick.

The date exported to America is known as the 'Fard.' Of those varieties that will stand export it is by far the best. It is not so delicate or delicious an article by any means as the lovely yellow dates called locally 'Khilas' or 'Hillal'; but these kinds will not stand packing and export, and have to be eaten fresh, as they will not keep many days, and even a journey to India is too much for them.

The large number of varieties of dates is astonishing. No doubt, it is a provision of Nature that there should be many different kinds, for when one kind suffers from a bad season, another will do well. As a general rule, the smaller dates are the better flavoured, and those that have comparatively small stones are generally of higher quality than those with large ones.

Dotted about upon the sea of dates which I have mentioned one gradually discerns in the dim light of the godown a number of craft, mostly at anchor, but some few passing along the channels which have been carefully marked up and down and across the expanse. These craft are, as they should be, of the feminine gender, and though seemingly at anchor, yet each of them is busily engaged in picking out the best dates and putting them into hand-baskets. When her basket is full, she weighs anchor and makes sail, or, if you prefer, gets up steam, and is off to the roof of the building, where we may as well follow. Here she again comes to anchor in front of one of the beautifully clean white boxes which she is going to fill, and she is generally accompanied in her work by one or two female friends or relatives. One woman selects the dates she has brought up from the basket, and pressing two, three, or four very carefully together with her fingers, places them as carefully into the bottom of the box, which has in the meanwhile been furnished by one of her companions with a lining of wax-paper. Her companions also engage themselves in selecting the dates from the basket, putting all bad or broken ones on one side. Each woman tries to pack into her box only good dates, as, at the subsequent inspection, if bad dates are found, the box is rejected and the results of her labour are lost. The dates are packed in very exactly, so many lengthways and so many crossways. It is quite apparent that some of the women are much neater and quicker than others. I suppose I must have seen two hundred at work together, and I was told that there was ample employment for as many again.

The women engaged are mostly Beloochees, some are pure Arab, and some Seedees or Africans. Many of them are young and fairly

good-looking, and wear a quantity of jewelry. But they vary considerably, and of course age or appearance is no consideration to the employer of their labour.

Each box is packed with two layers of the fruit projecting above the top, and is then ready for pressing. It is placed under a small hand screw-press, and pressure is put on till the projecting portion is level with the top.

The next operation is rather interesting: the box is taken before a young American, who is sitting on an old packing-case, looking extremely hot: it is turned upside down, and the whole of the contents slide neatly out in a solid mass like a huge brick. The young American examines the brick on every side, and satisfies himself that only good dates have been put in. The lady who packed the box is standing by, an interested spectator. If the box is approved, she receives a numbered ticket, which at the end of the day she can exchange for money. One of these tickets is worth about thirteen annas, which are equal to as many pence at the present day. A clever woman can pack more than one box in the course of the day.

The brick of dates having been re-inserted, the box goes down-stairs to the other half of the building, where the lid is nailed on and the hoop-iron fastened. It is then ready for export.

The dates rejected by the women up-stairs are brought below and placed in a heap, where they are again overhauled, good ones again being thrown into the 'sea' in the other half of the building. The final rejections after this third examination go into bags, and are stamped in by dirty men with their feet. These are locally sold as refuse for what they will fetch, and are mostly exported to India in native vessels.

A pleasing feature of the work is its voluntary nature. Payment is made entirely by results. No one need do more work than she likes; each woman can come or go as she pleases. The women, as also the visitors, have to brave the armies of wasps which, attracted by the luscious fruit, swarm on every side.

#### A SUBMERGED RAILWAY.

A REMARKABLE railway has been designed and constructed by Señor D. M. Alberto de Palacio, a Spanish engineer, at Onton, near Bilbao, Spain, which is certainly a novel and bold undertaking, and reflects great credit upon its constructor. It has been built with a view to facilitate the shipment of iron ore on that part of the Spanish coast, which is high and rocky, and exposed to the full force of the sea, no harbour being in the immediate vicinity. At the foot of the rocks there is an evenly sloping shore, which extends out to a considerable distance. It is upon this incline that a submerged track has been laid. The roadbed of the railway has a length of about six hundred and fifty feet and a width of twenty feet, upon which two sets of tracks, each three feet three inches wide, are placed, constituting a four-rail railway. The slope is five feet in one hundred feet. The car—if it may be so called—which runs upon this railway, and upon which the ore is conveyed from the cliffs to the ships, consists of a high iron tower made in the form of a pyramid, having a wide triangular base, and

mounted on wheels, which run upon the quadruple railway track. The platform of the tower, upon which the load of mineral is placed, rises about seventy feet from the track, a height which is sufficient to raise it above the decks of ordinary vessels when the tower is run alongside. This great rolling tower is operated automatically. It is connected to the shore by means of a strong wire cable, which passes over pulleys secured to the rocks. At the landward end of the cable there are attached some weighted cars, which move up and down an incline. These form a counterbalancing weight for pulling the tower, when empty, in towards the shore.

The iron ore to be loaded upon the vessels is brought from the mines, not far distant, by a rope railway. From the mineral dumps upon the heights the mineral is conveyed part of the way down the cliff through a shoot, the end of which projects beyond the cliff; and when the empty tower is drawn to shore by the weighted cars, it automatically opens an end gate in the shoot, when the mineral drops upon the platform in a continuous stream until a weight of ore (about one hundred tons) sufficient to overcome that of the counterbalancing weighted cars has fallen upon the platform. When this takes place, the tower, by its own gravity, begins to move down the inclined railway, and the gate of the shoot automatically closes. The tower continues to glide down the inclined railway through the water until it reaches the side of the ship, which is anchored fore and aft; and then, by the throw of a lever, the platform of the tower being inclined, the whole load on the platform is almost instantaneously deposited upon the ship, passing down through slides into her hold. As soon as the load is discharged, the counterbalancing cars begin to draw the tower inward again towards the shore, and thus the operation of moving the tower backwards and forwards automatically, and automatically loading and discharging itself, is carried on with the greatest regularity. It is stated that the railway will load five thousand tons of ore per day. The cost of constructing it, including everything, was less than four thousand pounds.

#### LOST FRIENDSHIP.

If I could know you feel just one regret

For all the joy and love of long ago,

That some dear mem'ry makes the tear-drops wet

Dim your sweet eyes that I have worshipped so—

If I could feel your hand in mine again,

See your most perfect face with crown of sheen,

Then deathless night, which on my life has lain,

Would change to golden morning's smiling mien.

Could I but heal your great heart-pain at last,

Fire your pure soul with some deep love new-born,

Then wipe away the darkness of the past

With shattered hopes and broken vows you mourn,

Sweet! I would give my life to bear the blow,

All my great love to have instead your pain,

And rest content if I could only know

My gift to you had not been made in vain.

FLORENCE TURNER.

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